

The seal impressions and the seals

In the Petras archive were found 72 impressions or possible impressions from seals. There are six instances where a document carries more than one seal impression. In these cases it is most likely that the same seal has been used twice as is certainly the case on **D38**. In the remaining five cases, however, the preserved fragments are too small to be certain.¹ In four instances we have found the same seal used on different documents. Thus PE 003 and PE 005 have each been found on two different documents² while Seal 007 and 032 have both been found on three different documents.³ This reduces the possible number of seals involved to 61, but there is no way we can be certain that the remains from the archive really represent this many seals. Many fragments are so small that they may easily be part of another seal impression although the fragments do not physically fit. This, for example, may very well be the case with PE 037 and PE 039 which were both found on the same type of clay and which both have the same kind of seal surface with a light engraving. Some small fragments may be part of already known seals where too little is preserved to be certain, as in, for example, the case of PE 064 which may very well be part of PE 019. Other fragments are so small and/or so insignificant that one may perhaps question their identification as part of a seal impression.⁴ It is thus uncertain how many seals the archive represents, but if we consider the larger and characteristic fragments it is absolutely certain that a minimum of 25 seals were involved,⁵ while it is very probable that the actual number is closer to 40 or 50.

Only in one instance do we have a seal impression completely preserved with all its details, PE 009, while PE 003 can be reconstructed from a composite drawing. In a few more instances the nodules have been so well-preserved that we see almost the entire seal impression only slightly mutilated at the edge because the nodule was not quite large enough to receive the entire imprint. Five such seals are known: PE 002, PE 006, PE 012, PE 019 and PE 044. Of interest in this collection is PE 006 used on a peg sealing. In this case there was plenty of space to imprint the entire motif, but it was done in a way that only two thirds were actually impressed. The remaining impressions are fragmentary and some very much so. In several instances the impres-

¹ **R1, D9, Co1, D3** and **Mi9**.

² PE 003 on **D16** and **Mi10**; PE 005 on **D34** and **D35**.

³ PE 007 on **D11, D24** and **Mi11**; PE 0032 on **D31, D12** and **D33**.

⁴ For example, PE 043, 045, 048, 053, and 062.

⁵ PE 001-007, 009-013, 015, 018-022, 026, 028-029, 032, 041, 044 and 065.

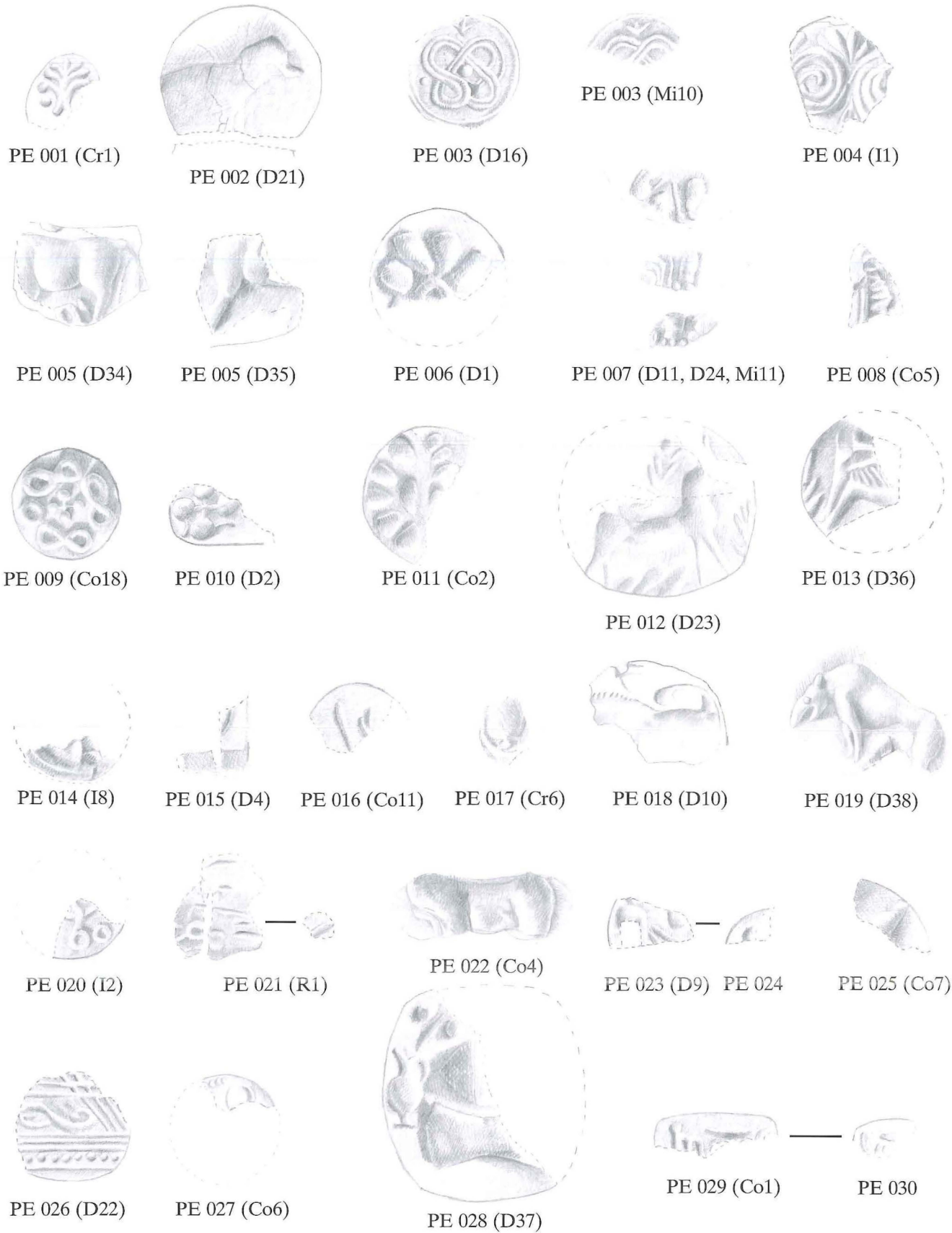




Fig. 74 (both pages). Drawings of seal motifs found in the hieroglyphic deposit. Scale 2:1.

sions are sufficiently well-preserved to give a clear idea of seal type and/or motif while several are so tiny that nothing can really be inferred from them.

The motifs on the Petras seals can be divided into four categories: a) figural motifs, b) hieroglyphs, c) geometric designs and d) indeterminable. Among the seal types used it is possible to identify pentschaft, stamp, three- and four-sided prisms, discoids and perhaps rings and lentoids. A few of the seals used may perhaps have been in metal while by far the majority was stone, and it seems that both hard-stone and soft-stone gems were used.

The Motifs

Hieroglyphic inscriptions

Four impressions carry hieroglyphic inscriptions with certainty. These are PE 028 (**PE I 01**), PE 010 (**PE I 02**), PE 038, (**PE I 03**), PE 029 (**PE I 04**), while two are more uncertain: PE 030 (**PE I 05**) and PE 017 (**PE I 06**). The identification of the signs and inscriptions has already been discussed above (p. 166–8). In the case of **PE I 02–05** we see that they have been found on prisms – probably four-sided prisms. This is not unexpected since 75% of the hieroglyphic inscriptions are found on three- and four-sided prisms.⁶ The type of seal connected to **PE I 06** is indeterminable, while the type of seal on which **PE I 01** is found is very unusual with its oval-squarish outline and with a length not much exceeding the width. It has a clearly curved surface for which reason it is not very likely to be from a stamp. A few three-sided prisms, however, do display features that recall **Co1**. This is, for example, true for *CMS* II, 2, no. 244 from Malia⁷ and perhaps *CMS* II, 2, no. 295 and 296 of unknown provenance.⁸ It would thus seem reasonable to accept that the seal used on **D37** was a three-sided prism. Among the very fragmentary preserved seal impressions there may perhaps be more with hieroglyphic inscriptions. This may, for example, be the case on **Mi17** (PE 051) where the preserved part of the design is not incompatible with the sign 012 as found on #302.γ.⁹

Figural motifs

Among the more or less complete and diagnostic seal impressions we find different kinds of quadrupeds on six different seals;¹⁰ one almost completely preserved impression (PE 002) probably depicts an animal, while one seal, PE 013, certainly depicts a griffin. Furthermore three fragmentary impressions originate

⁶ Karnava 2000, 165, Table 32.

⁷ Also *CHIC* #271.

⁸ *CMS* II, 2, no. 296, cf. also *CHIC* #253.

⁹ *CHIC* #302, and p. 390, cf. also *CMS* XII, no. 107. The seal is of unknown provenance.

¹⁰ PE 012, 019, 018, 005, 065, and 022.

from a seal, PE 032, where a kind of “monster’s head” is the dominant motif. Among the more fragmentarily preserved impressions three may very well be from seals depicting quadrupeds,¹¹ while another two, PE 058 and 008, with fine details, are more likely to represent figural motifs than geometric designs.

Among the quadrupeds at least four different animals are depicted. PE 005 and 065 are undoubtedly bovids, probably cows. The two seals are very much alike, but minor differences makes it clear that we are dealing with representations from two different seals. The bovine on 065 apparently has no tail and the hind leg is somewhat thicker than the one we find on 005, and also 065 appears to be somewhat more deeply engraved than what we find on 005.

The animal we find on PE 018 is without doubt a standing male lion. The mane is clearly indicated by small strokes, and the male lion is the only animal in the corpus of Aegean glyptic art which is represented with a tuft at the end of the tail. This feature, of course, is also found often on representations of griffins where the body is a lion’s body. The only exception from this rule known to me is *CMS* V, no. 676, where a horned animal is also provided with a tuft at the end of the tail. However taken together with the indication of the mane on PE 018, there is little doubt that it represents a lion.

The animal depicted on PE 019 cannot be identified with certainty, except that it seems safe to say that we are dealing with a beast of some kind. The watchful pose of the animal and the slim waist seem to clearly indicate this. Unfortunately both impressions are badly preserved and there is no certain indication of a tail. However one animal which has a large tail often hidden between its hind legs is the wolf, which may perhaps be a possible identification of the animal. The elongated head, relatively small ears and the fact that the upper part of the jaw is rendered longer than the lower one, may also point in the same direction. It has not been possible to find very good parallels for this animal in the Aegean iconography, although *CMS* II, 5, no. 284 is a candidate. On this sealing from Phaistos is seen an animal which is interpreted as “Wolf oder Hund”.¹² The pose of the animal also slightly recalls the one we find on a sealing from Hagia Triada.¹³

The quadruped on PE 012 also cannot be identified with certainty, although a deer seems likely. The indication of a short tail is uncertain because of the fracture of the sealing, and another fracture has fractured the head except for a short horn or a long ear. The joint on at least one of the forelegs clearly indicates a bovid and the slender body, long legs and relatively strongly built hindquarters might well accord with the identification of a deer.

Of the quadruped on PE 022 only the body and the upper part of the legs are preserved. The front legs are very heavy and seem to be angled backwards below the belly of the animal. A good parallel for this pose is found on a clay

¹¹ PE 050, 061 and 064.

¹² *CMS* II, 5, p. 245. Note also the head on *CMS* II, 5, no. 300 (wolf or dog) where the lower part of the jaw is rendered shorter than the upper jaw although not in such an exaggerated manner as seen on PE 019.

¹³ *CMS* II, 6, no 82.

sealing from MM II Phaistos where the front part of a lion is rendered in a somewhat similar way.¹⁴ Whether our animal is also a lion must remain very uncertain.

The motif on PE 002 remains enigmatic. Although relatively deeply engraved the seal impression is poorly preserved, and no details which might have helped in the identification are visible. The outline of the motif most resembles an elephant, but this seems quite unlikely since ivory from elephants is only known later.¹⁵ Turned *c.* 45° anticlockwise a bird may perhaps be considered a possibility.¹⁶

On PE 013 we find a griffin, probably with the head facing backwards. Other griffins are known from the MM II period from, for example, Phaistos¹⁷ and Malia.¹⁸

The motif on PE 032 is not at all clear. What is seen on **D31** and **D12** looks like the oval head of a fantasy monster with one ear and an open mouth. Below the lower jaw there are clearly remains of a “beard” which is found again on **D33**. The composite drawing thus seems to display the head and part of a foreleg of an indeterminable “monster”. No parallels to this motif have been found, while faces of animals are not unknown in the MM II glyptics being found both in Malia,¹⁹ Phaistos²⁰ and Knossos.²¹

The motif on PE 050 most of all recalls the central front part of an animal, but too little is preserved to be certain, and the same applies to PE 061 and PE 064. For the last mentioned impression, it should, however, be repeated that the preserved outline of what may be the back of an animal exactly fits the outline found on the beast on PE 019.

The last two impressions where there may perhaps be remains from figural motifs are PE 058 and PE 008. From PE 008 too little is preserved to be sure of anything, while the curved object with barred strokes inside on PE 058 does recall, for example, *CMS* II, 8, no. 132 from the Temple Repositories at Knossos.

One thing which is noted concerning the animals where the part of the seal below the belly is preserved, is that the landscape is clearly marked with rock motifs, as clearly seen on PE 012, 019 and 005. Such rock motifs connected to animals are well-known in MM II Phaistos,²² as are also the simple plant motifs seen in front of the animals, cf. PE 012 and 013 and behind the animal on PE 012.²³ The combination of the two elements is also documented in

¹⁴ *CMS* II, 5, no. 272.

¹⁵ I am grateful to Olga Krzyszkowska for this information.

¹⁶ See, for example, *CMS* II, 6, no. 214 from Malia.

¹⁷ *CMS* II, 5, nos. 317-319.

¹⁸ *CMS*, II, 6, no. 215; for the date see *id.*, p. 196.

¹⁹ *CMS* II, 6, no. 194.

²⁰ *CMS* II, 5, nos. 229, 300.

²¹ *CMS* II, 8, nos. 36-38; for the date, see *id.* Tabel 3, pp. 824 and 832, see also *CMS* II, 2, no. 48 from the necropolis Prophitis Elias.

²² *CMS* II, 5, nos. 259, 265, 270 and 276.

²³ Plant motifs are, for example, found on *CMS* II, 5, nos. 255-6, 265, 270, 276 and 298.

Phaistos.²⁴ Filling ornaments behind or above the animals which are not plants but different, though indeterminable motifs as seen on PE 005 and PE 018, are also very common in MM II Phaistos.²⁵

Non-figural motifs

Most of the more or less completely preserved impressions with simple geometric designs fall within known patterns of the period. This applies to PE 006 where a number of dots radiate from a dot in the centre.²⁶ The other impression where radiating dots are found, PE 011, is unusual in that this system is only found in one third of the seal being flanked in the centre by a row of small dots. Our seal impression is only a little more than half preserved, but the obvious asymmetry may perhaps recall *CMS* II, 5, no. 16. The intertwined rope design on PE 003 is common in the MM repertoire²⁷ while our seal is a little unusual in that the extra decorative motif of the ‘Dreiblatt- oder Blütenmotiv’²⁸ is only found a single time. Unusual also is the dot found in the left-hand part of the motif as a filling ornament while the central dot is more common.²⁹

There are no really good parallels to the only completely preserved motif found on PE 009. It consists of three “eights” with an additional circle and a ‘croix de pomme’ in the centre. A somewhat similar motif is found on *CMS* II, 2 no. 23, but only with three figure eights and a star in the centre.³⁰ Spirals and S-spirals are very common in Aegean glyptics, but the elaborate form with filling motif of leaves as found on PE 004 is not very usual. An early example is known from Tholos II at Lenda,³¹ while a single spiral from Knossos may perhaps also be recalled.³²

Another almost completely preserved impression is PE 044 for which no close parallels have been found.

The motif on PE 026 seems rather unique. The central S-spiral, of course, is a well-known motif, but its framing within straight and oblique lines and a row of at least eight fine dots also framed by parallel lines at the bottom is not.

Also seal PE 001 with its leaf/branch-like motif is without close parallels.

The remaining motifs are very fragmentarily preserved, and nothing definite can be said about the entire motifs. There are, however, elements which are

²⁴ *CMS* II, 5, nos. 265, 270 and 276.

²⁵ *CMS* II, 5, nos. 253, 263, 266, 268-269, 271, 288 and 290.

²⁶ Compare for example *CMS* II, 5, nos. 135, 136 and 140 from Phaistos and *CMS* II, 6, no. 201 from Malia.

²⁷ For example *CM* II, 5, nos. 152-168; *CMS* II, 8, no. 25.

²⁸ Also found with intertwined rope design on *CMS* II, 5, no. 159. This motif is also frequently found with other simple main designs as seen on, for example, *CMS* II, 5, nos. 177-178 and 213-214.

²⁹ In a slightly more elaborated form on, for example, *CMS* II, 5, no. 155-157.

³⁰ If correctly restored, a similar motif with three figure eights and no additional motif in the centre is seen on *CMS* II, 5, no. 152 from Phaistos.

³¹ *CMS* II, 1, no. 194.

³² *CMS* II, 8, no. 114.

easily recognisable. This, for example, holds true for PE 034 which displays circles with a raised dot. This element is known from an early period and it is found several times in MM II Phaistos.³³ Very clearly marked small circles as seen on PE 020 are also found on early seals.³⁴ Isolated small circles without dots cf. PE 014, 020, 056 and possibly 027, are also known as a filling ornament from MM II Phaistos.³⁵ The combination of oblique strokes combined with large dots cf. PE 041, are also known from MM II.³⁶ The preserved part of the motif on PE 055, for example, is not incompatible with a vessel with a handle as found often in the hieroglyphic inscriptions,³⁷ but also as isolated motifs.³⁸ The idea of more or less radiating, irregular, simple strokes cf. PE 016, is also known from other early examples in the glyptic art.³⁹ The motif found on PE 025 and PE 035 might perhaps be part of a ‘Vierblätter’⁴⁰ or simple “star”.⁴¹ The idea with many parallel strokes as fill ornamentation cf. PE 059, is also well-documented in the MM II repertoire from Phaistos.⁴² Concerning the lightly engraved motif found on PE 039, it is tempting to see it as antlers from a stag, cf. the somewhat later seal in the British Museum.⁴³ Very lightly incised, indeterminable motifs as found on, for example, PE 031 and PE 036 are also known from other early seals where at least parts of the motifs are very lightly incised.⁴⁴

One impression remains to be discussed: PE 015, which appears rather unique. The seal would originally have been square and a tentative reconstruction of the outline indicates a size of *c.* 1.2 × 0.8 cm, with a very slightly curved surface. The upper and lower part of the seal surface was left untouched, while a square was engraved in the central part and a fine oval was engraved within the square. Presumably the motif of this unique seal would have been engraved within the oval, but this part is totally mutilated on our impression. The most tempting comparisons for the type of seal are two ivory cushions from tombs at Knossos, but on those two seals the entire surface of the seal is used for decoration.⁴⁵ This seal appears to be so unusual in the Minoan repertoire that an import may perhaps be suggested.

³³ *CMS* II, 5, nos. 51-55 and 58.

³⁴ *CMS* IX, no. 30.

³⁵ For example *CMS* II, 5, nos. 103, 253 and 263.

³⁶ For example *CMS* II, 5, nos. 23 and 27, which, however are not close parallels to the motif on PE 041.

³⁷ #052-054, cf. *CHIC* 409-410.

³⁸ For example *CMS* XII, nos. 35 and 59.

³⁹ *CMS* II, 5, no. 201; *CMS* V, no. 485 and *CMS* XI, 132.

⁴⁰ Cf. *CMS* II, 1, no. 92a.

⁴¹ Cf. *CMS* II, 5, no. 70.

⁴² For example, *CMS* II, 5, nos. 30, 42- 44, 61, 93, 116-117.

⁴³ *CMS* VII, no. 67.

⁴⁴ See for example, *CMS* II, 2, no. 188; *CMS* VS, 1A, no. 114; *CMS* VII, no. 254; *CMS* XI, no. 140 and *CMS* XII, no. 120.

⁴⁵ *CMS* II, 2, nos. 70 and 71. For the type of seal a four-sided prism in the Delphi Museum may perhaps also be a possible parallel, cf. *CMS* V, no. 397.

The seals (Table 1)

It seems likely that six or more likely eight different types of seals were used in the Petras archive: petschafts, stamps, three-sided and four-sided prisms, discoids, lentoids and perhaps also a ring and a cushion. The criteria used to determine (or rather suggest) which type of seal had set an impression, is to first observe from the casts whether the seal had a flat or a curved surface. Then, when part of the rim is preserved to see whether it comes from a circular, oval, square or other shape. Most shapes in the catalogue have been given with a “?” since it may often be difficult to distinguish between a petschaft and a stamp, and between a discoid and a lentoid. In the only example where we have part of the string mark preserved, PE 035, we can be almost certain that a lentoid was used.

As we have interpreted the seal used we find impressions from six petschafts/stamps.⁴⁶ They all have a geometric design, well-engraved and apparently of good workmanship. Also it is worthy of note that they are rather small with a diameter of 1 cm or less. There are eight seals which we have interpreted as stamps.⁴⁷ They probably also all have geometric designs and the quality of the designs is much more varied than we find among the petschafts. Apart from the small oval seal PE 001, they are larger than the petschafts with a diameter of 1.3 or a little more. Four sides of four-sided prisms are recognised.⁴⁸ They all bear hieroglyphic inscriptions and they appear – based on the size of the signs – to have been all rather small. The one which can be reconstructed in full, PE 029, measured $1.1 \times c. 0.6$, and the remainder need not have been larger. Of the seals with a curved or slightly curved surface one is, as mentioned above, almost certainly from a lentoid, PE 035, with most likely a geometric design and an estimated diameter of 1.5. Then there are 16 different seals identified which appear to be curved and circular, most likely discoids (and/or lentoids).⁴⁹ One, PE 016 is very small with a diameter of $c. 1.0$ while the remainder are somewhat larger with diameters between 1.3 and 1.8. The designs on these seals mostly appear to be geometric, while six have figural motifs, different animals, a griffin and a monster(?). The quality of the seal designs seems to vary. Two impressions have been interpreted as coming from large three-sided prisms.⁵⁰ They are both fairly well-preserved with a slightly curved surface and an odd squarish-oval shape, which seem to best fit a three-sided prism. Our two impressions must be from different seals since they are slightly different in size.⁵¹ Both seals are of a fine workmanship, the one representing a walking lion and the other a hieroglyphic inscription. The seal PE 019, with the representation of a watchful beast, is from a large oval gem. The

⁴⁶ PE 003 (twice), 009, 014, 020, 044, 054a.

⁴⁷ PE 001, 006, 007 (thrice), 011, 047, 055, 057, 060.

⁴⁸ PE 010, 029, 030 and 038.

⁴⁹ PE 002, 004, 005 (twice), 012, 013, 016, 021, 025–027, 031, 032 (thrice), 041, 049, 056 and 065.

⁵⁰ PE 018 and 028.

⁵¹ Est. $\varnothing c. 2.0 \times 1.8$ (PE 052) and $c. 1.8 \times 1.6$ (PE 018).

Type	Petschaft/s	Stamp	?	4-sided pr	Discoid	Lentoid	3-sided prism	?	Ring?	Cushion?	?
Roundel					021						
<i>Nodulus</i>								037			
Crescent		001	017								
04 (irr)	014, 020	057			004, 031	035		036, 039, 040		046, 063	
05A (comb)		011, 047		029, 030	016, 025, 027, 056, 065			008, 022, 062		034	
05B	009									048	
05		060									
07A (peg)		006		010	041			023, 024		042, 043	
07B (flat)		007			032		018			015	
07C	003, 044	007, 055		038	002, 012, 026			033, 061		045	
07D					005, 005, 013, 032, 032						
07E							028				
07								019			
08	003, 054a	007	054b		049			050, 058, 059, 064		051, 052, 053	
Total	7	10	2	4	19	1	2	15	1	1	10
Different	6	8	2	4	16	1	2	15	1	1	10

Table 1. Distribution of seal types on sealing types.

rim is not seen clearly in any of the impressions, but the general outline permits the estimation of the original diameter as *c.* 2.0×1.4 and it has tentatively been suggested that this gem represents a gold ring. The last seal with enough of the rim preserved to permit suggestions for shape is the small, unusual seal, PE 015. The surface is only very slightly curved. The best parallel for the square outline is a cushion, although it may also be from a type of seal foreign to the Aegean repertoire (*cf.* above).

If we consider the two main categories of seals, those with a flat surface and those with a curved surface, we notice that it is only the ones with a curved surface which display motifs with figural designs. Those with a flat surface have either hieroglyphic inscriptions (the four-sided prisms) or geometric designs. Such a distribution of designs seen in relation to seals used is not uncommon for other MM II sealing deposits, while those representing figural motifs are somewhat more numerous in the Petras material. Another tendency which is quite obvious when we consider the two main categories, is that the “flat-faced” seals are much smaller than their curved counterparts. One of the clearest examples of this is seen in the case of the hieroglyphic inscriptions, where the three-sided prism with a curved surface is almost double the size of the four-sided prisms. We also notice that, with one exception, there is no consistency in the types of seals used on the different types of documents. This seems to indicate that all kinds of seals were at work on all kinds of documents. The exception is Type 07D which has been found five times and which is represented by three different seals – all high quality seals with curved surface and figural motifs. Now, five sealings are a small sample, but they do reveal the only consistent pattern when we consider seal type and motif with a sealing type. It shall be suggested below (pp. 252–4) that the seals PE 005 and 032 represent bureaucrats working in the archive. If this proves to be correct, one may perhaps suggest that Type 07D is a sealing type specially for the archive and that seal PE 013 with the griffin, also belonged to one of the bureaucrats.

